

Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization Project

FY 2007 Request for Applications

Application Submission Deadline: November 8, 2006



U.S. Department of Agriculture

**Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
and Foreign Agricultural Service**

**COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE; AND
FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

IRAQ AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION REVITALIZATION PROJECT

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.500

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business on November 8, 2006 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: On behalf of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service requests applications from U.S. land-grant institutions to lead projects to revitalize the agriculture sector in Iraq by strengthening agricultural extension and training programs at select Iraqi agricultural universities. The Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization Project (IAER) will be implemented by providing extension training programs for Iraqi nationals in an effort to enhance agricultural management, production, and marketing related to small and medium-sized production enterprises. Training programs will be held in the United States and third country sites and are targeted towards establishing partnerships between a consortium of U.S. land-grant institutions and Iraqi agricultural universities in five of the 18 Iraq governorates. Approximately \$5.3 million is available for support of this program.

This notice identifies IAER objectives, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an IAER award.

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PART I-FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Pursuant to the authority in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 *et seq.*), the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004 (P.L. 108-106) made funds available to the President of the United States for security, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Iraq. In accordance with Section 632(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151), the President apportioned some of these funds to the Department of State (DOS) and, in order to utilize the unique resources of its agencies and land-grant institution partners to strengthen Iraq's agricultural extension system, DOS transferred some of these funds to USDA.

The National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act (NARETPA) provides the Secretary of Agriculture authority to enter into agreements in furtherance of the purposes of this program. Furthermore, the Secretary has delegated this authority under NARETPA (Sec. 1472(b), 7 U.S.C. 3318(b)) to the Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES).

On FAS' behalf, CSREES will administer IAER activities using a portion of the funds previously described. Starting in FY 2007, CSREES plans to use these funds to build partnerships between U.S. land-grant institutions and Iraqi agricultural universities to promote an extension and training system in Iraq that is responsive to the needs of the country's agricultural sector. **As a result of security constraints, sponsored activities must be planned for and conducted outside Iraq, either in a nearby, more permissive security environment, or in the United States.**

B. Purpose and Priorities

Following decades under the Baathist regime and heavy reliance on the United Nations' Oil-for-Food Program, Iraq's market-based agriculture systems need to be rehabilitated to improve the national agricultural economy. Because much of Iraq's population relies on agriculture for livelihood, the country's stability partially depends upon the agricultural sector's performance. Iraq's natural geography provides both land-intensive and water-intensive challenges to agricultural production. Salinization, urban migration, and a weakened agricultural education and extension system are among the problems that have hampered the potential for economic growth in the agriculture sector. As a result, a large share of the country's population depends on food rations. Given these challenges, it is essential to provide Iraq with the latest technological tools and training necessary to improve its production capacity and efficiencies. A strong extension system that responds to the needs of farmers, processors, marketers and others in the agricultural and rural development enterprise, and that builds markets is a key element of recovery.

It is imperative that the agriculture sector in Iraq create conditions for food security, serve as a significant generator of employment in rural areas, and contribute to the sustainable management of the natural resource base. IAER seeks to restore and expand a sustainable agriculture sector in

Iraq that is market-driven, interfaced with the private and other non-government sectors, complemented by public sector oversight, and supported by an effective extension service based on dynamic education and research. Such adjustments should lead to a more effective system of technology transfer that improves the livelihood of Iraqi producers through increased adoption of appropriate science-based knowledge. IAER can contribute to these changes by improving extension management and technology transfer systems at Iraq's agricultural training institutions, and strengthening program delivery for Iraqi agricultural extension programs at the national and governorate levels.

IAER's approach is to build strong institution-to-institution cooperation that supports a viable extension system. Using support from IAER, the lead land-grant institution will organize, oversee and manage a consortium consisting of the lead institution and four other U.S. land-grant institutions. The five consortium members will partner with five agricultural universities from across Iraq. The consortium should draw upon the diverse strengths of the land-grant system. When choosing consortium members, the lead institution should consider an institution's ability to implement in program areas that are compatible with and complement the activities proposed by the potential members of the consortium. One-on-one institutional partnerships will link American expertise in extension training and advisory services with relevant agricultural colleges in Iraq and involve appropriate Ministry of Agriculture personnel. The lead institution is expected to manage and/or facilitate all aspects of supported activities including intra-consortial coordination and arrangements, travel of project personnel, training, quarterly and other requested reporting to CSREES and FAS, and preparation of a final close-out report (see Part VI, E. for more information about reporting). The lead institution must identify consortium members and facilitate the selection of Iraqi partner institutions. Final selection of the Iraqi universities will be made in consultation with the government of Iraq and the U. S. Embassy in Baghdad.

The IAER program requires the lead institution and four consortium members to form partnerships with institutions in five different governorates of Iraq. Four of the five potential partners are as follows: Baghdad University's College of Agriculture (traditionally strong in irrigated agriculture and horticulture); The College of Agriculture and Forestry at Mosul University (focus on cereal production in rainfed areas, forestry, and wood technology); The College of Agriculture at Tikrit University (special strengths in gypseous soil cultivation); and The College of Agriculture at Basrah University (emphasized date palm research, horticulture and fisheries).

An initial award of \$500,000 will be made to fund start-up consortium activities. Start-up proposals will describe how these funds will be utilized over a 6-month period. Specifically, start-up activities should target the development of a consortium of universities that will initiate and develop working relationships with partnering Iraqi institutions, formalize plans for extension training, and prepare follow-on funding requests for interventions that respond to IAER priority needs and that will be carried out over the remaining year and a half of the project. **Requests for follow-on funding will be subject to review and approval by CSREES and FAS, and may not total more than \$4.8 million (including indirect costs). The total award (start-up and follow-on funding) will not exceed approximately \$5.3 million for approved activities.**

IAER sponsored activities will include third-country or U. S. based training of Iraqi extension personnel, short- and long-term training (or long-term training plans) of Iraqi extension personnel, development of train-the-trainer instructional materials, and other activities that lead to technology transfer. In developing training and other activities, including the identification of local needs, the lead institution and consortium members must collaborate with their respective Iraq counterparts.

To help facilitate in-country processes, such as identifying trainees and assisting with travel arrangements for them, FAS will provide a small coordinative team which will be located in Baghdad. Members of the coordinative team will not be part of the IAER project and applicants should not request funding for a presence in Iraq. Nevertheless, a coordinative team will be made available to assist the consortium in providing logistical support to ensure overall project success.

All sponsored activities must be planned for and conducted outside Iraq, either in a nearby country with a permissive security environment (such as Jordan or Egypt), or in the United States. IAER must help to address the needs of Iraq's major ethnic groups, both in stable and less stable areas of the country. The location of project activities will be re-assessed and updated as the security environment in Iraq changes.

The following are technical areas in which strong extension expertise is needed. The list is illustrative; applicants are expected to work with Iraqi counterparts to develop partnerships focused in these or other technical areas that meet demonstrated needs in each governorate. Partnerships within the consortium that are formed between U.S. and Iraqi institutions should draw upon the strengths of all consortium members to address local needs related to developing the Iraqi agricultural extension system.

Arid Crop Production Development: The goal of the project in this technical area will be to enhance the capacity of producers to better meet the cereal (rice, wheat, and barley) and horticultural crop (irrigated fruits and vegetables) needs of the Iraqi people. Activities in this area should focus on improving cereal seed productivity, and "best-practices" for cropland management, and the delivery of research-based information through extension programs. Corollary activities should provide training for good land stewardship and soil quality maintenance.

Livestock Production and Animal Health: Livestock (primarily poultry, goats, and sheep) production in the country has the capacity to be a significant generator of farm income and a source of improved nutrition (milk, meat and cheese) for consumers. Activities undertaken will lead to the development of an extension program that promotes improved animal husbandry, and health and nutrition, with a view to increasing livestock productivity.

Water Resources Management and Irrigation Technology: Iraq includes both arid and wetland agricultural regions. The project will develop extension programs to promote improved practices in on-farm irrigation and water resource management particularly in rural communities.

Priority activities include but are not limited to:

- Third-country based training of extension specialists to include training workshops, coaching, and follow-up training. Training should emphasize both technical expertise as well as the skills needed to effectively transfer knowledge. Possible sites include government-to-government training with the Ministry of Agriculture in Egypt, Turkey or Pakistan;
- Short-term, non-degree training at U.S. land-grant institutions or USDA agencies for Iraqi faculty and extension personnel. Additional training may be supported by USDA through the Cochran and Borlaug Fellowship Programs and Faculty Exchange Program;
- Long-term degree training, or plans for long-term degree training (Masters, Ph.D., and post-doctoral training) at U.S. land-grant institutions that strengthen the Iraqi extension system;
- Development of distance learning methodologies that facilitate training and learning;
- Development of instructional materials for train-the-trainer extension programs; and
- Technology transfer including field trials, demonstration plots and laboratory methods that demonstrate methods for rapid adoption by Iraqi farmers.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

In FY 2007, approximately \$5.3 million is available to support IAER. CSREES expects to competitively award one cooperative agreement to a U.S. land-grant institution that will lead a consortium consisting of the awardee and four other U.S. land-grant institutions. The awardee will receive a maximum of \$500,000 in start-up funds for the first six months. Requests for follow-on funding will be subject to review and approval by CSREES and FAS, and may not total more than \$4.8 million (including indirect costs but not start-up funds). All funds must be expended by September 30, 2008.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application. Funding levels may be adjusted based on the technical review of submissions.

B. Types of Applications

This is a new program; therefore, all applications will be new. New applications must not have been submitted to CSREES previously. All applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

PART III-ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Only land-grant institutions are eligible to receive IAER awards. Eligible land-grant institutions include all 1862, 1890, and 1994 land-grant institutions. All consortia members must be land-grant institutions. The lead institution and consortium members may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Consistent with 7 U.S.C. 3318(b), the selected applicant (including all consortium members) will be required to contribute resources to the accomplishment of project objectives.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Address to Request Application Package

An application may be submitted to CSREES either electronically or as a paper-based application in response to this RFA. Regardless of whether the application is submitted electronically or paper-based, the application materials are accessed via Grants.gov and prepared in the same manner.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. Download and install PureEdge Viewer, a small, free program that provides access to the grant application. See http://www.grants.gov/resources/download_software.jsp#pureedge.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “Step 1: [Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions](#),” enter the CFDA number 10.500 in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, locate the item for this program and click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “[CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov](#).” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating PureEdge forms, using PureEdge with a Macintosh computer), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

- Grants.gov customer support
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
Business Hours: M-F 7:00 am – 9 pm Eastern Standard Time
Email: support@grants.gov

Electronic Applications

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Organizational Representative to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. See http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

See <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for resources for applying electronically.

Paper-based Applications

Paper applications are not recommended except when deemed necessary. Applicants are encouraged to apply electronically via [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications should be prepared following the instructions contained in of the document entitled “[A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov](#).” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents (this request for applications and the “Guide”), the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide.

1. R&R Other Project Information Form

a. Project Summary/Abstract (Field 6. on the Form). The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the IAER.

Please Note: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 30 pages of written text and up to 10 additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (40 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- i) An introduction which states the goals and objectives of the proposed activities and documents needs. This brief narrative should also include relevant data that support the focus of extension training.
- ii) A description of the proposed project’s potential for contributing to a strengthened Iraqi extension system to include: 1) a description of the lead institution’s capabilities to plan, manage and evaluate an existing or new and diverse consortium of universities and activities so as to revitalize the Iraqi extension system; 2) a description of the consortium’s ability to implement activities outside of a high-risk environment that lead to improvements within that environment; 3) a description of the role of each consortium institution and lead project personnel of such institutions, and the ability of each institution to perform that role; 4) a description of how the start-up process will be undertaken and managed; 5) a brief description of activities to be undertaken after the initial start-up phase is completed; 6) a description of indicators that will be used to evaluate the project and a description of project staff’s ability to evaluate project effectiveness; and 7) a timetable that includes key milestones in the start-up phase of the project.

iii) A description of the project's overall approach and cooperation which 1) identifies proposed activities and methods in clear and sufficient detail to be understood by expert reviewers; 2) describes the proposed consortium, explains how each consortium member will each contribute to the project, and how the project will be coordinated; 3) describes methods used to include relevant stakeholder groups both in preparing the start-up proposal and in the subsequent planning processes; and 4) describes institutional commitment to the project.

To the extent possible, start-up proposals should describe consortial activities that are anticipated to occur during full project implementation, and how these activities address the goals of the project.

2. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

a. Senior/Key Persons include lead project personnel of consortium institutions; therefore, a senior/key person profile is to be completed for such individuals.

b. A Biographical Sketch must be completed for each Senior/Key Person following instructions in Part V, section 4 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. The Biographical Sketch also is to include a comprehensive listing of international experience, especially as it relates to managing and/or participating in programs that are constrained by security concerns, and a presentation of extension credentials.

3. Budget, Budget Justification and Cost Sharing

Budget

The lead institution should submit a detailed budget for \$500,000 for the six month start-up phase of the project. Each of the other four consortial members will perform a substantive portion of the project and as such, should submit a detailed sub-award budget for the first six months of early phase activities.

Budget Justification

As part of the "Budget Justification," the lead institution should submit a budget plan, using general cost categories, for the second six month period, and for the remaining project period. In addition, the lead institution should present an overall budget summary for the entire 2-year project period. The lead institution should also explain in detail and justify costs related to any training, workshops, demonstration plots and other relevant activities that are planned during the first six month period.

Cost Sharing

The lead and consortium institutions are required to contribute resources to the accomplishment of project objectives and are *encouraged* to cost share by limiting indirect costs to 10% of total federal funds awarded. A detailed line item breakdown of cost sharing contributions should be identified in the "Budget Justification."

4. CSREES Supplemental Information Form

a. Funding Opportunity (Field 1. on the Form). *This information is pre-populated from the opportunity package.* Verify “Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization Program” is under funding opportunity name and “USDA-CSREES-OP-000161” is under funding opportunity number.

b. Program Code (Field 2. on the Form). Enter the program code name "Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization Program" and the program code "AA-S".

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

Electronic applications must be received by Grants.gov by close of business (COB) on November 8, 2006 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) and paper-based applications must be received by CSREES by COB on November 8, 2006 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after the deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the Authorized Representative has not received a confirmation message from CSREES within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA (for the Small Business Innovation Research program (SBIR) the Program Contacts are specified under subsection 1.5 of the SBIR Program Solicitation) and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in (for competitive programs) the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel or (for non-competitive programs) a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Program funds may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities. Program funds may not be used to support the salaries of U.S. government employees. The purchase of equipment is limited to that which is required for training, teaching, extension demonstration and other relevant project activities.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the applicable guide for preparation and submission of an application; paper-based applications should be submitted as specified in the document entitled, “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of Paper-based

Applications” and electronic applications should be submitted as specified in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov.”

The following is **additional information** needed in order to submit a paper-based application in response to this RFA:

Paper-based applications: An original and six copies must be submitted. In addition, submit six copies of the application’s Project Summary. All copies of the application and the Project Summary must be submitted in one package.

PART V-APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant international extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) the level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant domestic and international extension or education activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant extension or education fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The following evaluation criteria and weights will be used to evaluate proposals submitted for funding (weight is in parentheses; 100 total points):

Overall Approach and Collaboration. This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach and the quality of cooperation.

(a) Proposed Approach - Is the problem or opportunity clearly documented? Do the objectives of the start-up process appear to be sound and appropriate relative to the issues being addressed? Are the procedures sound? Does the approach demonstrate a clear understanding of the Iraqi agricultural sector and institutional experience with Iraq and/or other countries in the region? Is the start-up process effectively designed for maximum impact given that activities will be conducted outside of Iraq? Does the timetable for the start-up and subsequent phases of the project appear to be realistic? *(10 points)*

(b) Personnel Resources - This criterion relates to the number and qualifications of the key persons who will carry out the planning process. Are designated project personnel qualified to carry out a successful process? Are there sufficient numbers of personnel associated with the planning and implementation processes to achieve the stated objectives and achieve the anticipated outcomes? *(10 points)*

(c) Budget and Cost-effectiveness - This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the planning process and is cost-effective. Is the budget request clear and adequately justified? Are costs reasonable and necessary? Will the budget be adequate to carry out proposed activities? Does the budget maximize value per dollar of USDA support? *(10 points)*

(d) Cooperation – Are institutional partnerships clearly described and justified, with appropriate levels of coordination specified between the lead institution and other partner institutions in the U.S., Iraq or elsewhere? Will the partnerships clearly contribute to attaining IAER goals? *(10 points)*

(e) Institutional Commitment - Is there evidence that the lead and all partnering institutions attribute a high priority to the start-up phase and subsequent phases, that the process and overall goals of the project are linked to the achievement of consortial members' long-term strategies? Will the project have reasonable access to other needed resources such as equipment, facilities, computer services, library and other support resources? Is there evidence that the lead and all partnering institutions are contributing resources (funding and in-kind contributions) toward the success of the project? *(10 points)*

Potential for Contributing to a Revitalized Iraqi Extension System -This criterion highlights the likelihood that the proposed start-up process and activities that flow from it will help strengthen the ability of Iraqi extension specialists to deliver timely advice and information to agricultural users.

(a) Impact – Will the proposed start-up process identify and address important constraints or opportunities in the Iraqi extension system? Is it designed to identify key points of intervention that, if addressed in follow-on activities, will have positive impacts on the Iraqi extension system? Will the start-up process involve key Iraqi stakeholders from relevant Iraqi universities, ministries, farming groups and the private sector who can effect change in Iraq? Will the process adequately address the financial sustainability of the Iraqi extension system? Will the needs of the private sector and/or communities be considered in ways that can be addressed by the Iraqi extension system? Will the process serve as a model for other activities? *(20 points)*

(b) Products and Results - Are the expected products and results of the start-up process clearly defined and likely to be of high quality? Is there a demonstrated ability to conduct international programs under complex and constrained conditions such that high value results are attained? Will the start-up phase and subsequent phases contribute to a better understanding of, and improvements in, the extension and relevant supporting systems in Iraq? *(15 points)*

(c) Evaluation - Are evaluation plans adequate and reasonable for demonstrating overall success of the start-up and follow-on activities? Do they allow for continuous or frequent feedback during start-up and beyond? Are the individuals involved in evaluation skilled in evaluation strategies and procedures? Are they likely to be able to provide an objective

evaluation based on the strategies proposed? Do evaluation plans facilitate the measurement of progress and results? *(10 points)*

(d) Continuation Plans – Will the start-up process clearly lead to development of impactful follow-on interventions? How likely is it that the proposed start-up activities will lead to long-term relationships or cooperative partnerships, including those between universities and those with the private sector and/or non-governmental organizations, that are likely to enhance program impacts? Are the benefits to be derived from the project likely to transcend the funding period? *(5 points)*

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants. At the end of the fiscal year, names of panelists will be made available in such a way that the panelists cannot be identified with the review of any particular application.

PART VI-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make awards to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of CSREES as the effective date of the cooperative agreement shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the cooperative agreement effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds provided by CSREES under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are provided in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a cooperative agreement identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another CSREES program. CSREES will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

C. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;

- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view CSREES award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and
- (11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

D. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to applications considered for review and to projects awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A--USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3--USDA debt collection regulation.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A--USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121--USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015--USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220 and 230) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301 6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017--USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and 7 CFR Part 3021--Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018--USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019--USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3052--USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407--CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute)--prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq.--Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

E. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The awardee must submit quarterly program and financial reports to CSREES and FAS. In addition, the awardee may be asked to file updates and progress reports with CSREES and FAS in response to periodic requests for information from other governmental agencies. All reports should document significant activities or events undertaken by the consortium and show progress toward achieving goals and objectives of the project. The reports should specify performance targets for that period and contain evidence that verifies the extent to which past targets have been met. The awardee must also submit annual reports to the Current Research Information System (CRIS). No later than 60 days after the completion of the project period, a final report will also be due to CSREES and FAS via CRIS, which will cover the entire project period.

The awardee will convene a meeting of consortial members and other relevant stakeholders at least once a year to review progress, identify lessons learned and plan upcoming activities. CSREES and FAS will participate in these meetings as observers. The first of these meetings should be held during the planning phase of the project and start-up funds should be budgeted for this purpose.

PART VII-AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Hiram Larew or Mike McGirr, International Programs, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA; STOP 2203; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2203; telephone: (202) 720-3801; fax: (202) 690-2355; e-mail: hlarew@csrees.usda.gov or mmcgirr@csrees.usda.gov.

PART VIII-OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to minor changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee to the ADO who will submit the request in writing for approval by CSREES and FAS prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee to the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed September 30, 2008. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of CSREES transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions are applicable:

1862 Land-grant colleges and universities means those institutions eligible to receive funds under the Act of July 2, 1862 (12 Stat. 503-505, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 301-305, 307 and 308), including the land-grant institutions in the Insular Area.

1890 Institution or 1890 Land-grant institution or 1890 colleges and universities means one of those institutions eligible to receive funds under the Act of August 30, 1890, (26 Stat. 417-419, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 321-326 and 328), including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University.

1994 Institution or 1994 Land-Grant Institution means one of those institutions as defined in section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note) as amended. These institutions are commonly referred to as Tribal Colleges or Tribal Universities.

Administrator means the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved is delegated.

Authorized departmental officer means the Secretary or any employee of the Department who has the authority to issue or modify award instruments on behalf of the Secretary.

Authorized representative means the president, director, chief executive officer, or other designated official of the applicant organization, who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization.

Awardee means the organization designated in the award document as the responsible legal entity to which an award is made.

Collaboration or Cooperative effort means a joint effort among two or more institutions, organizations and/or other entities with the capacity to conduct projects intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the program.

Consortium means a confederation of five land-grant institutions (one lead institution and four associate institutions) that have entered into a cooperative arrangement for the purpose of carrying out agreed to activities and achieving common objectives as set forth in this request for applications.

Cooperative agreement means the legal instrument reflecting the relationship between the Department and the 1862 land-grant institution, 1994 land-grant institution, or 1890 land-grant institution, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University, to which the Secretary awards funds to assist in meeting the costs of conducting, for the benefit of the public, an identified project that is intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the program as identified in these guidelines.

Department or USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

Education activity means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

Extension activity means an act or process that delivers science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions.

Insular Area means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Matching or cost sharing means that portion of allowable project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of in-kind contributions.

Peer review means an evaluation of a proposed project for scientific or technical quality and relevance performed by experts with the scientific knowledge and technical skills to conduct the proposed work or to give expert advice on the merits of a project.

Peer review panel means a group of experts qualified by training and/or experience in particular fields to evaluate eligible proposals in those fields submitted under this RFA.

Prior approval means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined above.

Project means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by an award.

Project Director means the single individual designated in the grant application and approved by the Secretary who is responsible for the direction and management of the project.

Project period means the period, as stated in the award document, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

Secretary means the Secretary of Agriculture and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved is delegated.

F. CSREES' Grants.gov Implementation Plans

CSREES is continuing to develop its capacity to exchange proposal and grant data electronically with its grantees through [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and to process, review, and award proposals and grants electronically.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, CSREES offered an electronic application option for select grant programs and partnered with five institutions to use Grants.gov Apply. CSREES utilized the SF-424 R&R (Research and Related) forms package (see 70 FR 9656, published in the Federal Register on February 28, 2005) along with CSREES Agency-specific forms and instructions to receive the electronic applications. These pilot activities were successful and provided lessons for applicants and CSREES.

As a result, for the FY 2007 (October 1, 2006-September 30, 2007) cycle, CSREES is requiring electronic submission through Grants.gov for some programs while providing a Grants.gov option for others. Please visit <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/fy07changes.html> for information about FY 2007 submission requirements by program. For more information about CSREES' Grants.gov plans, including important announcements, program implementation, and detailed requirements, see the CSREES' web site, http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/other_links/egov/egov.html. The information on these web sites will be updated as appropriate. It is suggested that the sites be visited periodically for important updates.

G. DUNS Number

A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Therefore, potential applicants should verify that they have a DUNS number or take the steps needed to obtain one. For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to http://www.grants.gov/Request_duns_number.jsp. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

H. Required Registration for Grants.gov

The Central Contract Registry (CCR) is a database that serves as the primary Government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the Government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the Government. Such organizations must register in the CCR prior to the submission of applications via grants.gov (a DUNS number is needed for CCR registration). For information about how to register in the CCR visit the “Get Registered” section at <http://www.grants.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.